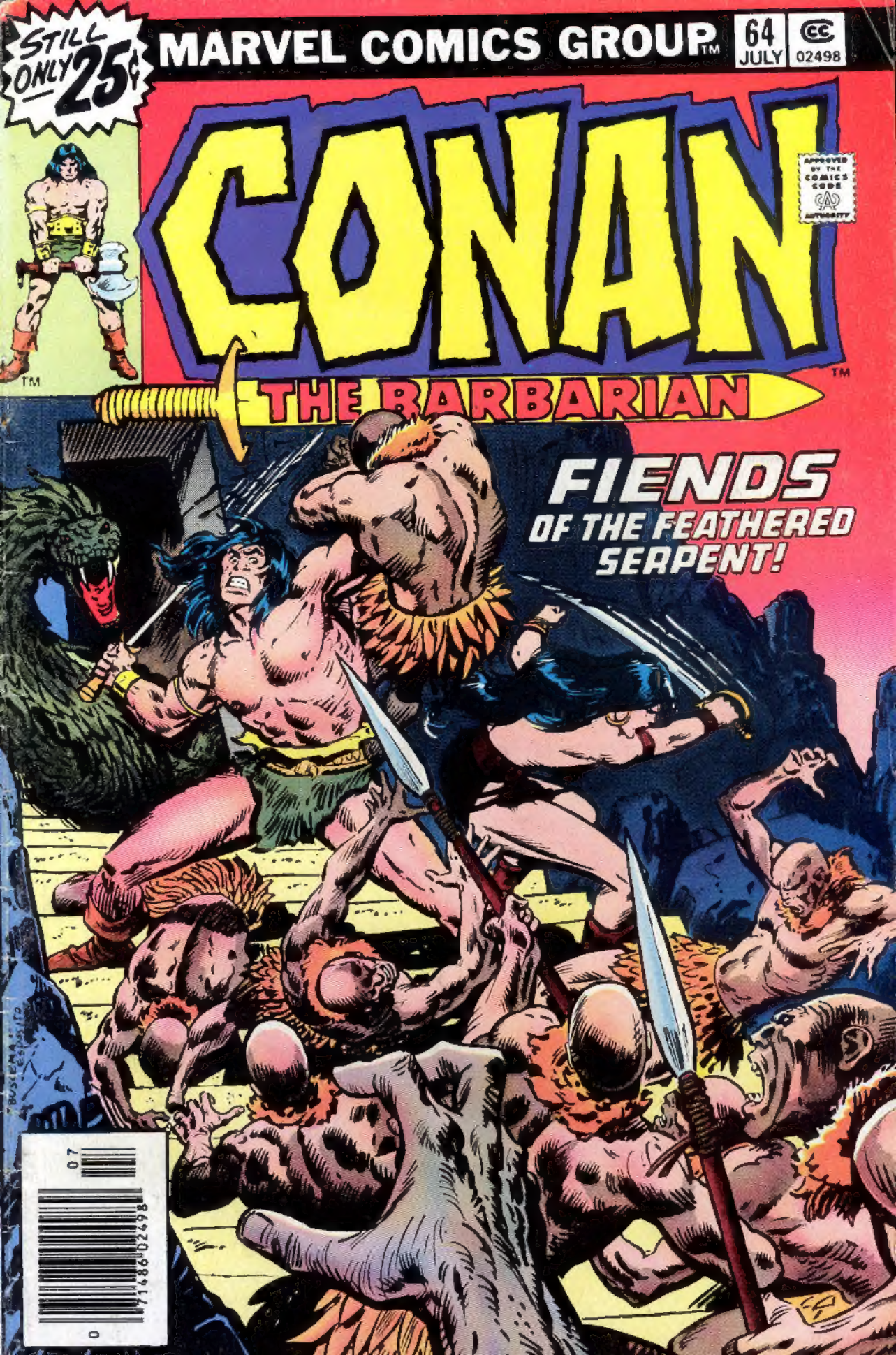
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CONAN
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THE BARBARIAN
FIENDS OF THE FEATHERED SERPENT!

"Know, O prince, that between the years when the oceans drank Atlantis and the gleaming cities, and the rise of the sons of Aryas, there was an Age undreamed of, when shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles beneath the stars.

"Hither came Conan, the Cimmerian, black-haired, sullen-eyed, sword in hand, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth, to tread the jeweled thrones of the Earth under his sandaled feet."

—*The Nemedian Chronicles.*

Stan Lee PRESENTS: CONAN THE BARBARIAN™

SOMEONE SAVAGE THIS WAY COMES!
LET HIM THEN BEWARE, LEST HE LEARN TO HIS SORROW--
THE SECRET OF SKULL RIVER!
THE OLD MAN IS BLIND; EVEN FROM A DISTANCE, CONAN CAN SEE THAT.
BUT SIGHTED MEN, TOO, MAY BE BLIND IN THEIR WAY...
APOLOGIA:
DUE TO PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS, INKER STEVE GAN WAS UNABLE AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT TO DELIVER OUR COVER-FEATURED STORY ON TIME FOR THIS ISSUE. THUS, MAKING OUR USUAL VIRTUE OF NECESSITY, WE'RE TAKING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RE-PRESENT A TALE NEVER BEFORE PRINTED IN COLOR, AND WHICH ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN SAVAGE TALES #5.
(P.S.: FOR YOU CHRONOLOGY BUFFS, THIS MINI-EPIC OCCURS BETWEEN THE EVENTS RECORDED IN CONAN #44-45.) --R.T.
ROY THOMAS & JIM STARLIN & AL MILGROM
WRITER ARTISTS
FEATURING THE HERO CREATED BY ROBERT E. HOWARD
FREELY ADAPTED FROM A PLOT BY JOHN JAKES

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NO, OLD MAN! YOU'VE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM ME.

I BUT NEED SOME DIRECTIONS... PREFERABLY, THE WAY TO THE NEAREST WATER.

AYE, I CAN GIVE YOU THOSE, EASILY ENOUGH.

BUT, YOU'D DO BETTER TO STRIKE OFF MY HEAD, AND LEAVE IT LAUGHING BLACKLY IN THE DUST.

SO, YOU'D HAVE ME THINK YOU SOME SORT OF SEER, EH?

JUST POINT ME TO WATER, AND SPARE ME YOUR VAGUE PROPHECIES.

IN YONDER VALLEY LIES A SMALL RIVER, THAT MEN CALL SKULL...

BUT, BETTER TO POUR POISON IN YOUR OWN WINE-CUP THAN TO DRINK FROM A RIVER WITH SUCH A NAME.

LOOK, I'VE TOLD YOU-- I'M THIRSTY, AND THAT'S THAT!

CROM, BUT IT'S A FAR RIDE FROM TURAN TO THE CITY OF SHADIZAR!

IT'S A FAR SHORTER HAUL, MY ROUGH-VOICED FRIEND..

..FROM THE GREEN-CLAD GARDENS OF EARTH...

... TO THE TEEMING SHORES OF DUSKY DEATH.

CONAN RIDES ON, THINKING IN HIS OWN WAY WHAT ANOTHER WILL SAY, NEARLY 12 MILLENNIA HENCE:

"IT IS THE EASIEST THING IN THE WORLD FOR A MAN TO LOOK AS IF HE HAD A GREAT SECRET IN HIM."

STILL, EVEN A TOPPLED SUNDIAL GIVES THE PROPER HOUR, AT LEAST ONCE IN A SUNSPLASHED DAY....

...AND THE LURKING GIANT'S SPRAWLING SHADOW GIVES CONAN A MOMENT'S GRACE TO EVADE THE HURTLING WAR-CLUB.

HIS MOUNT, HOWEVER IS FAR LESS FORTUNATE.

CROM!

YOU MISERABLE, MISBEGOTTEN SON OF A BEHEMOTH!

THAT HORSE YOU KILLED WAS WORTH TEN OF YOU...

...SO I'LL CARVE YOU INTO HIS LAST MONUMENT!

YOU-- HURT HANUMAN--

NOW, HANUMAN --WILL HURT YOU!

THE SHEER FORCE OF THAT BLOW, IF IT HAD STRUCK FLESH INSTEAD OF STEEL, WOULD HAVE SEVERED TORSO FROM LIMB...

...AND CONAN KNOWS IT!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

IN SUCH A SITUATION, A SWORD WILL DO A MAN LESS GOOD...

...THAN AN ARROW!

AARRRRRRRRD

AFTER THAT ENCOUNTER WITH A MAN WHO DWARFED ANY THAT HE HAS EVER KNOWN OR SEEN, CONAN TRULY NEEDS A DRINK...OF WATER, OR WHATEVER.

BUT, WITHOUT A STEED, THE JOURNEY IS LONGER THAN IT SEEMED...

AND STONE-RAKED WOUNDS HAVE TIME TO BLEED...

...BEFORE HE COMES AT LAST TO THE VALLEY BEYOND.

BY THE TIME HE REACHES THE STREAM WHICH SCARCELY DESERVES THE NAME OF RIVER, CONAN HAS QUITE FORGOTTEN ITS NAME AND ITS LEGEND.

THE WATER FEELS GOOD TO HIS SCALP AND SKIN, AND HE MAKES READY TO DRINK DEEP...

...WHEN HE IS RUDELY REMINDED OF AN OLD MAN'S DARK WARNING.

...BY THE GRIM, GAUNT IMAGE OF WIDE-GRINNING **DEATH**, LEERING BACK AT HIM FROM OUT THE SULLEN **WATERS**...

...WATERS **WHICH**, HE SUDDENLY, DIZZILY NOTICES...

...ARE STRANGELY...

...DARK!

YOU...

...ARE...

...AWAKE! THAT IS **GOOD**.

THEN, THE HERBS OF HEALING **CAN** EFFECT A CURE, PROVIDING ONE IS IN THE **EARLY** STAGES, AND THAT ONE'S **BODY** IS STRONG.

I GUESS...MY BODY'S **STRONG** ENOUGH... FOR WHATEVER YOU'RE **TALK-ING** ABOUT, GIRL.

WHAT **ARE** YOU TALKING ABOUT, BY THE WAY?

AND WHO THE DEVIL **ARE** YOU?

I AM **NAIA**...

AND THESE ARE THE **ELDERS** OF THIS VILLAGE...

...AS WELL AS MY FATHER **THURIBALD**, WHO IS ALSO ITS **LORD MAYOR**.

I'M GLAD TO SEE **SOMEONE** IN CHARGE OF THIS PLACE... IF ONLY SO I CAN COM-PLAIN OF THE **WATER**!

BUT, WHY A WHOLE **DELEGATION**...TO WELCOME ONE LONE AND AILING WANDER-ER WHO'S **SLEPT AWAY** A DAY?

WE'VE OTHER THINGS THAN YOUR **HEALTH** IN MIND, OUTLANDER... THOUGH OF COURSE WE ARE **GLAD** YOU HAVE RECOVERED.

AND IT'S A **WEEK** YOU'VE SLEPT THE DEEP SLEEP...**NOT** A MERE DAY.

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

A WEEK!? HARD TO BELIEVE --YET, I SUPPOSE IT'S TRUE.

IT IS. BUT NOW, ENOUGH OF THIS IDLE CHATTER

COME. WE'VE SERIOUS TALKING TO DO. ELSE-WHERE.

IT'S YOUR TOWN. LEAD ON....

BUT, THESE UN-SPEAKING MEN, WHO TRAIL YOU LIKE SO MANY HOODED SHADOWS--

WHY DO THEY WEAR--?

WHAT DID YOU SAY, BAR-BARIAN?

NOTHING.

MY FATHER WILL EXPLAIN ALL THIS IN DUE COURSE, OUTLANDER

I'M SURE. BUT MEAN-WHILE, I'M STILL THIRSTY.

SOME WINE, PERHAPS.

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!

WATER'S AN OVERRATED COMMODITY, AT BEST.

NOT WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE IT.

BUT, TIME GROWS SHORT, SO I'LL TELL YOU WHY WE TOOK YOU IN ...WHAT WE WANT OF YOU.

IF YOU MEAN YOU'VE EMPLOY-MENT TO OFFER ONE WHO'S ONLY HIS SWORD TO SELL...THEN SAY ON.

IT IS PRECISELY YOUR SWORD WHICH IN-TERESTS US.

LET ME TELL YOU OF A TIME, NOT SO VERY LONG AGO, WHEN THINGS WERE MORE CHEERFUL HERE...

AND WHEN YONDER RIVER'S NAME WAS SUM, NOT SAVILL...

THERE IS A CASTLE NOT FAR UP-RIVER, WHERE DWELLS ONE WE'D SOONER SEE DEAD THAN LIVING...

"HIS NAME IS SOPHOS, A POWERFUL MAN...AND ONE WITH GREED TO MATCH HIS POWER.

"TOO RARE BUT FAR-RANGING ARE HIS TRAVELS AND LAST TRIP, HE BROUGHT HOME A SOUVENIR--A WIZARD, MEN SAY --ONE ANAXIMANDER BY NAME, OF UNKNOWN ORIGINS AND UNKNOWABLE PURPOSE...

"...SAVE ONLY THAT HE WORKS NIGHT AND DAY IN THE CASTLE KEEP, PORING OVER UNHOLY BREWS AND DOING DARK WORK FOR HIS MASTER, SOPHOS

"THE FIRST WE KNEW OF IT, STRANGE FILTH BEGAN TO SPEW FROM THE CASTLE... THE LOATHSOME RESIDUE OF HIS NOXIOUS BREWS.

"IT POURED INTO THE RIVER THEN CALLED SUN...

"...AND FLOWED DOWNSTREAM, TO PASS THIS VILLIAGE WHICH SLUMBERED, UNAWARES.

"NOTING BUT A SLIGHT CHANGE IN COLOR, WE DRANK OF IT... FOR WHAT OTHER WATER HAVE WE?..

"...AND IT CHANGED US...TRANSFORMED US UTTERLY, ALMOST OVERNIGHT...

"...INTO POOR, SCURVY CREATURES WHICH HIDE FROM THE LIGHT OF DAY...

A SAD TALE, SURELY, THOUGH I NOTE THAT YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER LOOK WELL ENOUGH.

BUT, HAS THIS SOPHOS SO MANY MEN THAT YOUR WHOLE VILLAGE COULDN'T STORM HIS KEEP, AND SMASH THIS WIZARD'S VATS?

SHOW HIM, IVAN.

YOU'VE SEEN BUT A FEW PIMPLES, OUTLANDER--AN UNSIGHTLY WART OR TWO.

BUT, WHAT GOOD CAN ANY NUMBER OF MEN DO, WHEN THEIR BODIES WASTE A-WAY, DAY AFTER DAY, HOUR AFTER DREADED HOUR...

...INTO... THIS?

HELP US, OUT-LANDER-- PLEASE!

I'LL HELP YOU.

BUT, I'VE GOT MY OWN STANDARDS. AND I GENER-ALLY GET PAID WHEN I SELL MY SWORD-ARM.

WE'VE LITTLE MONEY, BUT YOU CAN HAVE ANY-THING IN THIS VILLAGE THAT YOU...DESIRE.

ANYTHING?

IN THAT CASE, THURIBALD...

...YOU'VE JUST HIRED YOURSELF A KILLER!

WHEN DARKNESS FALLS...

IT'S NOT GOING TO BE AN EASY PLACE TO GET INTO, WITH-OUT BEING SEEN.

OH, WELL. THERE IS SOMETHING, THOUGH, I'D LIKE TO KNOW BEFORE I START.

ASK.

YOUR FATHER NEVER ANSWERED MY QUESTION: WHY DON'T YOU AND HE SHARE THE DISEASE THAT'S AFFLICTED THE REST OF YOUR VILLAGE?

I'LL BE *HONEST* WITH YOU, OUTLANDER... SOPHOS IS *FOND* OF ME. HE GIVES ME *WATER* FROM HIS OWN PRECIOUS SUPPLY... JUST ENOUGH FOR MY FATHER AND MYSELF

IN RETURN, I...*VISIT* HIM FROM TIME TO TIME...

BUT NOW YOU'D BETRAY *HIM*, AS READILY AS YOU EARLIER BETRAYED YOUR OWN *VILLAGE?*

BY CROM, YOU VALUE YOUR OWN PELT *HIGHLY.*

PLEASE, OUTLANDER...DON'T *SCOWL* AT ME SO.

I THOUGHT YOU *LIKED* ME...!

LATER, BENEATH THE MOON-GOD'S STARING EYE...

SORCERY! EVEN CONAN'S WILDERNESS-HONED EARS HEAR *NOTHING*, TILL WITH A SUDDEN PREMONITION HE *WHIRLS*...

...TO FIND A GREAT WOOD-AND-METAL DOOR HAS LOWERED INTO PLACE BEHIND HIM, SO SILENTLY HE NEVER HEARD IT.

A SIMILAR MASSIVE PORTAL HAS APPEARED JUST AS ABRUPTLY BEFORE HIM...

...LEAVING THE NORTH-BORN BARBARIAN ALONE AND WOLF-LIKE AMONG A CASTLE FULL OF IMAGINED FOES...

...WHO SWIFTLY BLAZE INTO REALITY:

YOU'VE NOTHING TO SAY FOR YOURSELF, EH?

I KNOW NOT WHO YOU ARE, INTRUDER ...NOR DO I CARE OVERMUCH.

I AM SOPHOS...AND, IN THIS CASTLE, NO FOOT FALLS BUT THAT I AM WARNED OF IT BY THE MANY-EARED WALLS.

THAT AT LEAST IS A RELIEF, AFTER SO MANY WHIMPERING FOOLS THE VILLAGERS HAVE SENT TO ME.

NOW, I MUST LEAVE YOU

BUT, BEING A GRACIOUS HOST, IN MY WAY..

...I SHALL NOT LEAVE YOU..

...UNATTENDED.

EVEN AS THAT GRIM, GARGANTUAN FORM COMES LUMBERING DOWN THE NOW-OPEN CORRIDOR CONAN BLANCHES WITH DISBELIEF AND HORROR

SURELY THERE CANNOT BE TWO IN ALL THE WORLD LIKE THE GIANT HANGMAN WHO FELL TO AN INEVITABLE DOOM OVER A CLIFF SEE NOT TOO MANY LEAGUES DISTANT

YET EITHER THERE ARE TWO SUCH--OR ELSE IT'S A TITANICALLY TOWERING GHOST WHICH NOW SWINGS A MIGHTY EXECUTIONER'S AXE TO CLEAVE HIS OWN BROADSWORD IN HALF--

YET, WHEN THAT FIRST BLOW FAILS TO SPLIT CONAN'S SKULL, THE TIDE OF BATTLE SWIFTLY TURNS...

...TILL ONE WELL-PLACED THRUST OF WHAT'S LEFT OF HIS SWORD TURNS DEFEAT INTO VICTORY!

YOUR REACH S LONG, G AN... OR GHOST OF G AN...

B..T I M BETT NG I CAN GET PAST THOSE APE-LKE ARMS

...AND LEARN F THERE'S A HEART BENEATH ALL THAT QUIVER NG BULK.

THEN--DO T, BARBAR AN! DO IT!!

ANYTHING IS BET-TER TO GRANDALL--THAN WHAT GRANDALL IS!

LET ME GET THIS *STRAIGHT.* YOU--*WANT* TO DIE!?

WOULDN'T *YOU*-- IF YOU WERE *GRANDALL?*

ANAXIMANDER KEEPS SAYING HE'LL TURN ME *BACK,* BUT--

I THINK I START TO SEE THE *DRIFT* OF THIS. MAYBE I *CAN* HELP YOU--EVEN *ALIVE*--IF YOU'LL LEAD ME TO *SOPHOS* AND HIS *WIZARD*

HELP ME? THAT'S --WHAT *THEY* SAID--

BUT MAYBE--YOU'RE *DIFFERENT.* YES--I WILL *TAKE* YOU TO THEM...!

BY MITRA I THINK I'VE FINALLY *DONE* IT, SOPHOS!

AFTER A THOUSAND *TRIES,* A THOUSAND GALLING *FAILURES*...I BELIEVE I'VE *FOUND* THE SECRET YOU BROUGHT ME HERE TO *LEARN* FOR YOU.

GOOD. AFTER ALL, ANAXIMANDER, I'M NOT QUITE AS *PATIENT* AS THAT *IRON STATUE* OVER THERE.

BUT YOU *MUST* BE, MY DEAR SOPHOS, IF YOU'RE TO UNRAVEL MYSTERIES ONLY *HINTED* AT IN THE *IRON-BOUND BOOKS OF SKELOS*--THE HIDDEN SCROLLS OF *YATHELOS THE BLIND.*

EVEN WITH *MY* SKILLS, IT HAS TAKEN *MONTHS*--AS WELL AS THE *AGONY* OF THOSE PITIFUL WRETCHES *DOWNRIVER.*

THEY ARE *CATTLE,* THAT SUCH AS YOU AND I *FEED* UPON.

TRUE. YET, WITH SO *FEW* MEN AS YOU HAVE HERE, THEY COULD EASILY *STORM* THIS CASTLE

SOMETHING THEY WILL *NEVER* DO, WIZARD...

NOT WHILE *HANUMAN* AND *GRANDALL* STALK THE REGION, TO MAKE THEM KEEP THEIR *DISTANCE.*

HANUMAN AND GRANDALL... AH, *YES*...

OF COURSE, I'VE PROMISED THAT PAIR OF UNFORTUNATES A *CURE*... THAT THEY'LL BE *NORMAL MEN* ONCE MORE

ONLY *WE* KNOW THAT THERE *IS* NO CURE. THEY'LL BE MISSHAPEN GIANTS TILL THE DAY THEY *DIE*...

...WHICH MY FORMULAE BEING WHAT THEY ARE, WILL NOT BE *TOO LONG* FROM NOW!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

THEN,--IT'S *TRUE*-- WHAT GRANDALL HAS *FEARED* FOR SO LONG.

THEY *LIED* TO YOU. YOU'LL *DIE* SOON--AS YOU *LIVE*-- IN *MISERY!*

FUNNY SEEM SO *LONG* AGO--GRANDALL AND HANUMAN WERE *PEOPLE* LIKE ANYBODY ELSE--*BROTHERS* HUNTING IN FOREST.

THEY *CAUGHT* US-- BROUGHT US HERE-- MADE US *DRINK* SOMETHING THAT MADE US *BIG*.

IT GETS *HARDER* ALL THE TIME--FOR GRANDALL TO *REMEMBER*.

BUT GRANDALL THINKS *THIS*--GRANDALL WILL *HELP* YOU!

AND MAYBE.. *YOURSELF*.

THIS IS THE *LIQUID*, SOPHOS-- ALL I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DISTILL.

IT HAS THE *DESIRED EFFECT* ON THIS GARGANTUAN *IDOL*, WHICH I HAD CARTED HERE ALL THE WAY FROM *TARANTIA*...

BE *QUITE* ENOUGH!

WELL, SOPHOS?

IT MAKES THE *BREW* GLOW BRIGHT AND GOLDEN BUT-- THE *IDOL*--?

WATCH, MY DEAR PATRON. SEE HOW THE *FUMES* RISE, *GLEAMING*, FROM THE VAT

SEE HOW IT *HIDES* THE STATUE FROM VIEW, AS IF TO KEEP ITS GREAT SECRET AS LONG AS *POSSIBLE* FROM THE PRYING EYES OF MEN!

AND NOW, IT *CLEARS*.

LEAVING YOU A *VERY* RICH MAN FRIEND SOPHOS

THUS, YOU'VE NO MORE NEED TO *STAY* HERE, AMID HOSTILE PEASANTS WE'VE TURNED INTO *DIM PARODIES* OF HUMANKIND.

THE TORCH-LIT *CITIES* ARE OURS NOW, FOR THAT IDOL IS NOW COMPOSED OF *SOLID GOLD*, ENOUGH TO --

WHAT *ARE* YOU STARING AT SO HOS?

LOOK *BEHIND* YOU, MAN!

BY ALL THE GODS AT ONCE! I THOUGHT *GRANDALL* HAD DISPOSED OF YOU FOR *GOOD!*

YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW MY *NAME*.

YET YOU TRIED TO HAVE ME *KILLED*, MY CORPSE TOSSED ON A DUNGHEAP FOR THE *VULTURES* TO REND--

WELL, BY CROM-- THE *BUZZARDS* WILL EAT *WELL*, COME THE DAWN--

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

--AND THE JACKALS WILL DEVOUR THEIR OWN KIND!

DON'T SLAY THEM ALL, OUTLANDER! I AM SLOWER THAN YOU. BUT ST--

GRANDALL COMES! GRANDALL COMES!

ONE OF THE GIANTS! HE'S TURNED AGAINST--

AAAAA

YOU BOUGHT YEN'S LOYALTY SUPHOS AN. I STAYED BOUGHT JUST AS LONG AS IT TOOK FOR THE ODDS TO CHANGE

WAIT, MAN! WE'VE NO NEED TO DO BATTLE--NONE!

YOU'VE SEEN GOLD MADE HERE TH S N GHT

I CAN MAKE YOU A RICH MAN --A KING, ALMOST!

A DREAM TOLD ME ONCE I'D BE A KING, BEFORE I DIED.

BUT, CROM TAKE ME, I'LL WIN THAT CROWN, NOT BUY IT WITH TARNISHED GOLD.

SO, NO USE TRYING TO PURCHASE ME, SOPHOS...

I'VE ALREADY GOT A JOB!

WIZARDS, TOO, MAY STOOP TO MEANER WEAPONS THAN DARK SORCERY...

BUT, IF THEY'RE NOT SO PRACTICED AT THEM AS THEY MIGHT BE...

ARRGH

...THEY'LL FIND THEY HAD MORE PROFITABLY STAYED MUMBLING OVER THEIR DUSTY SCROLLS.

THERE IS NO SIGN, NOW, OF LIFE IN ALL THE CHAMBER, OR BEYOND IT.

DEAD THE NOBLE-MAN WHO SHOULD HAVE RESTED CONTENT WITH HIS LOT...

DEAD THE SORCERER WHO SHOULD HAVE SOUGHT THE STARS NOT GOLD.

A CASTLE FULL OF DEAD MEN...

...AND ONLY ONE WORTH THE MOURNING.

...YOU *LIVE!* IS THE TYRANT, THEN, *DEAD?*

AS DEAD AS HE'S *LIKELY* TO BE.

YOUR *WATER* WILL SOON BE PURE AGAIN.

...AND THERE'S A *GOLD STATUE* IN THE CASTLE THAT YOU CAN *MELT DOWN.*

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'LL *CHANGE BACK* TO THE WAY YOU WERE...

BUT I'M A *FIGHTER*, NOT A *MAGE.*

AND *NOW*, LORD MAYOR, I'LL CLAIM MY *REWARD*, AND BE ON MY WAY.

REWARD? OH, *YES...*

AS I RECALL, WE PROMISED YOU *ANYTHING* IN THE VILLAGE YOU *WANTED.*

AND I *SEE* WHAT I WANT.

I LOST MY *MOUNT* COMING TO THIS PLACE, SO I WANTED *ANOTHER.*

THIS LOOKS LIKE A *GOOD* ONE...

...ONE WELL WORTH RIDING *TWICE.*

AN OMNIUM-GATHERUM OF ODYSSEYS OCCULT, OLIOS ODD, AND OCCASIONS OBBLIGATO!

STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX

It's on sale at last! The greatest Marvel album of all! It's called "Spider-Man: Rock Reflections of a Superhero," on the Lifesong Record label. It's performed by the dynamite group, Hero (Marvel freaks, all!), and produced by Cashwest Productions, who brought you the hits of Jim Croce, Henry Gross, and Crack The Sky! Now if that's not enough, the album cover is a doozy by Johnny Romita, and no words of mine can do it justice! (Although you'll get plenty of words from me anyway—'cause guess who does the narration between the songs!) Remember—it's not a kiddie album. It's real rock 'n roll, performed by some of the best in the biz, so look for it in the new releases section of your favorite record shop! I can't wait till you hear "No One's Got a Crush on Peter," "Peter Stays and Spider-Man Goes," and "Gwendolyn," along with the other wild and wooly wonderments spinnin' your way on this dazzlin' disc! And now, just a few other less-than awesome announcements. Big John Buscema begged me to ask those of you replying to his Art School ad *not to send samples!* He can only examine your samples when he meets you. So, if you want to join the master's New York City class, send your request to Box 394, East Setauket, N.Y. 11733—and please, *don't send samples!* But I do wanna send regards to the friendly folk at the marvelous MiamiCon in Miami Beach, Florida, who ran one of the most enjoyable and elegant comicons of all. It was a real blast being there, and I wanna invite all the great guys and gals I met at MiamiCon (and even the few that I didn't) to join mighty Marvel at our own Con in New York from April 23rd to the 25th. We've so many treats and surprises in store for Marveldom Assembled at our 2nd Annual Con that it would take a whole extra Soapbox to even begin to describe them so just let me say that we expect it to be even greater than last year's unforgettable wingding! And now, till Galactus becomes a groupie, let's never forget the immortal quacks of Howard the Duck – fiat justitia, ruat caelum!

Excelsior!

Stan

ITEM! This is the month, True Believer—the month that our secret number 100 Value Stamp makes its appreciative appearance in one and only one Marvel mag. Natch, we're not going to tell you *which* mag, which means you'll probably have to buy 'em all (sneaky us, but what the hey—! Is there any better way to cash in a couple of sheckles—?), but we kinda think you'll find the Value Stamp Book worth the trouble you've taken to fill it. And maybe it's now time to thank Marvel's own PATY for conceiving the idea for our second stupendous set of stamps. Take a bow, Paty—you deserve it! And, in case you're straining your brain wondering why we picked this month to release our special stamp, let the truth be told now, or we shall forever hold our breath: Yea, verily, this is also the month of the Second Annual Marveloon, and we sorta figured we'd celebrate that monumentous occasion with our bonus number 100.

ITEM! While we're on the subject of Bullpen Bonuses, we oughta mention that the newest, niftiest, and novel-est annuals of all are on sale right now! For starters, how about these two — ? JACK "King" KIRBY's 52 page extravaganza, CAPTAIN AMERICA, featuring everyone's favorite star-spangled superhero, and Devil-May-Care DOUG MOENCH's and KEITH "Punch-'Em-Up" POLLARD's spectacular MASTER OF KUNG FU, waiting for you wherever better all-new annuals are sold. Don't say we didn't alert you, Discerning One!

ITEM! And don't think our astounding annuals are the only new additions under the far-reaching Marvel sun. We're also pleased to announce these two human additions to our bustling Bullpen, namely—JIM "Trouble" SHOOTER and ROGER "Sterno" STERN! Jim's replacing Cheerful CHRIS CLAREMONT who has left the nine-to-five frenzy of editorial life for a peaceful existence as a free-lance writer for merry ol' Marvel, scripting not only IRON FIST, THE X-MEN, and BLACK GOLIATH, but also the upcoming LUKE CAGE, POWER MAN ANNUAL—and a couple of issues of DAREDEVIL, giving Marvelous MARV WOLFMAN a much needed rest. Sterno is replacing Impish IRENE VARTANOFF as Reprint Editor, while Irene has moved up one more rung on the ladder of success by becoming Reprint Production Manager. Good luck to yuz all!

ITEM! Remember Lucky LARRY HAMA's art a few months back in KA-ZAR? Well, in case you're wondering where Larry disappeared to, check out New York's famed theatre, The Winter Garden, where Larry has no less than three separate roles in the newest Broadway smash, PACIFIC OVERTURES. Take it from us, Faithful One—the lucky guy's as wild an actor as he is an artist! Hope you rate a TONY AWARD, Larry, and when are ya gonna draw another story for us, huh?

ITEM! And while we're gabbin' about one Larry, let's welcome back another—LARRY LIEBER, that is, longtime writer/artist extraordinaire. That's the truth, Wild Ones, Larry's returned to the original House of Ideas to become art director for SPIDEY SUPER STORIES, the super-smash of the small-fry set. Just as good ol' Irv Forbush always says—"Once a Bullpenner, always a Bullpenner!"

ITEM! Ever hear of THE PRISONER? Well, if you've never seen the incredible TV series starring Patrick McGoohan just a few years back, you're gonna be hearing plenty about it in the next few months, because, starting this summer, Stainless STEVE ENGLEHART and an as yet unchosen artist will be teaming up to produce what may possibly become the super-hit of this Bicentennial year. It's filled with fantasy, mystery, and a sense of the supernatural, just like the original TV episodes — and we expect it to be the start of a whole new cult! (HOWARD THE DUCK, watch out!)

ITEM! Just a quick note to tell you that THE INVADERS is going monthly starting this summer, and NOVA—Marv Wolfman's new blockbusting brainchild – will also be monthly, starting with its first issue, on sale in June. And, if you're wondering why we feel this brand-new mag is worthy of an instant monthly status, you're just gonna have to take a look yourself to find out!

ITEM! And speaking of new mags, remember the name Ikaris? Well, you should, 'cause he's the newest Kirby Kreation, and we just mentioned him last month! Well, galactophile, his first senses-shattering issue will be on sale this very month, and the name of the book he's gonna be starring in is—THE ETERNALS! We said it before, and we'll say it again—this is *definitely* the brand-new Marvel Age of Comics! We may be number one, Frantic One—but we *still* try harder!